

267.185

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of: :
Douglas ROBINSON et al :
PCT/EP2003/007541 : PCT Date: July 11, 2003
Serial No.: :
Filed: Concurrently Herewith :
For: SPOUTED...ELECTROWINNING :
475 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016
January 10, 2005

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Hon. Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

To comply with Rule 56, Applicants are submitting herewith a copy of the International Search Report issued in the PCT application corresponding to the above application as well as copies of the cited art and Form PTO/SB/08A. The second and third references are in the A category or technological background.


As compared to the falling bed cell described in U.S. Patent No. 4,019,968, the cell element of the invention which comprises a draft tube capable of establishing a spouted bed of metallic beads offers several distinct advantages not even remotely suggested by the said patent. Firstly, using an internal draft tube to establish a spouted bed results in a different bead distribution as compared to the falling bed cell of the patent. The twin annuli or single annulus geometry described on page 9 of the present specification allows for a more compact cell design,

consequently resulting in an improved electrical current transmission within the cathode compartment.

Secondly, it is quite evident when comparing, for example, figure 6 of the present application with the drawings of the patent that using an internal draft tube allows for an easy and simple way to establish a recirculation of metallic beads in the cathode compartment. Evidently, with no external tubes protruding from the individual cells, the external circuitry required for a continuous operation of the cells is considerably reduced as compared to the device described in the patent. Therefore, the cell element of the present invention can easily be laminated to a compact cell stack or cell array for metal electrowinning resulting in an improved and more efficient overall plant side utilization.

Thirdly, as mentioned in the paragraph bridging pages 8 and 9 of the present specification, the internal draft tube suggested by the invention can act as a structural reinforcing element improving the mechanical stability of the stacked cells and/or allowing to employ a greater active area without encountering stability problems. It is therefore believed that the claims clearly are not anticipated or obvious from the patent.

Respectfully submitted,
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Sheet	1	of	1	Attorney Docket Number	267.183
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Art Unit	
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Examiner Signature		Date Considered
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